



Kimberly A. Foster  
Executive Director

# LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

## **COMMISSIONERS:**

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SANDRA RUDNICK  
STACEY SAVELLE  
ADELINA SORKIN, LCSW/ACSW, CHAIR  
DR. HARRIETTE F. WILLIAMS  
TRULA J. WORTHY-CLAYTON

## APPROVED MINUTES

The General Meeting of the Commission for Children and Families was held on Monday, **May 18, 2009**, in Room 739 of the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, 500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles. **Please note that these minutes are intended as a summary and not as a verbatim transcription of events at this meeting.**

### **COMMISSIONERS PRESENT (Quorum Established)**

Carol O. Biondi	Sandra Rudnick
Ann Franzen	Stacey Savelle
Dr. La-Doris McClaney	Adelina Sorkin, LCSW
Tina Pedersen, LCSW	Dr. Harriette F. Williams
Martha Trevino Powell	Trula J. Worthy-Clayton

### **COMMISSIONERS ABSENT (Excused/Unexcused)**

Patricia Curry	Rev. Cecil Murray
Susan Friedman	Steven M. Olivas, Esq.
Helen Kleinberg	

### **I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Sorkin.

### **II. INTRODUCTIONS**

Self introductions were made.

### **III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

#### **Action**

Motion by Commissioner Rudnick, seconded by Commissioner Worthy-Clayton, the Agenda for May 18, 2009 was unanimously approved.

**IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- **May 4, 2009**

**Action**

Motion by Commissioner Savelle, seconded by Commissioner Rudnick, the Minutes for May 4, 2009 was unanimously approved.

**V. CHAIR'S REPORT**

Chair Sorkin reported that the Commission letter opposing Propositions 1D and 1E was sent to the Board of Supervisors.

Chair Sorkin stated that she attended the Parking Trust Fund meeting at the Children's Court. This fund utilizes the parking fee money to support special projects such as New Beginnings Conference, CASA, and Art Work for the children, Public Counsel, and changing monitors in the courtroom for children who testify in the Judge's Chambers.

Chair Sorkin informed the Commission that she and the Executive Director received an e-mail from Commissioner Worthy-Clayton stating that has informed her Board Office of her decision to leave the Commission effective June 15, 2009.

Chair Sorkin again expressed appreciation to Commissioner Trevino Powell for her work on the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration. Commissioner Trevino Powell has prepared Certificates of Appreciation for each Probation youth who participated in catering the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration. Commissioner Biondi also expressed appreciation for the certificates, indicating the youth rarely receive any positive recognition. Several Commissioners indicated the certificates could be included in the youths' files/portfolios.

**VI. DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Deputy Director Ted Myers represented Director Trish Ploehn. Director Ploehn is in Washington, D.C. at the Center for Social Policy for Poverty and Child Welfare. Miguel Santana and Phillip Browning are also attending. Mr. Myers informed the Commission that it is anticipated that at least 4 out of 5 of the propositions will lose, and the Governor has announced that he will pass on 10% cuts for Child Welfare programs including those within the Waiver as well as, Group Homes and Foster Family Agencies (FFAs). In addition, the County General Fund will also be severely cut.

Commissioner Rudnick stated that the Governor is taking a lot of money from education. She suggested that DCFS and the Education Coordinating Council (ECC) work together to develop a plan and advocate for education for the children in need. Commissioner Pedersen stated that Regional Centers are also experiencing a big budget cut.

Mr. Myers announced that in observance of Foster Care Awareness Month, Steven Newman, a Children's Social Worker (CSW) was named as a Foster Care Hero. He is a former foster youth and has been working as a Social Worker for DCFS for the past 12

years. His outstanding contributions include helping foster children connect with prospective adoptive parents and connecting a young girl interested in track with his former track coach.

Mr. Myers stated that Supervisor Molina and DCFS were recognized in Sacramento for the First Supervisorial District's Education Pilot. The pilot is being conducted in the Montebello and Pomona Unified School Districts. There are approximately 37 youth participating at this time, with an average GPA of 1.39.

Mr. Myers also stated that DCFS is working on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), "Stimulus Packet", and Lisa Parrish is the department lead along with Rhelda Shabazz. Both are working with Rick Bryant working on homeless prevention. He indicated any of them would be glad to come to the Commission and give an update on this program.

Commissioner Biondi stated that a member of the Probation Commission informed her that foster and probation youth are supposed to be priority populations and the Workforce Investment Board is not making this happen. She asked Mr. Myers to inform the Department and possibly get the Board of Supervisors involved. Mr. Myers stated that he has run into that problem in the past, and that it is a common problem with the Workforce Investment Board. He stated that he will bring it to the Department's attention.

Mr. Myers announced the Grand Opening of the MacLaren HUB on May 27, 2009. Services will start in June 2009. He extended an invitation for the Commissioners to attend. The Executive Director asked that DCFS send the Grand Opening information to the Commission office for distribution to the Commissioners.

## **VII. UPDATE – DMH MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ACT (MHSA) UPDATE**

- **MHSA Impact on Children and Youth of Los Angeles County**

Chair Sorkin introduced Dr. Bryan Mershon and Gita Cugley, of the Department of Mental Health (DMH), and stated that Mental Health and Mental Health funding are very important issues for the Commissioners, and applauded the passage of Proposition 63, whose intent was to make new money available for Mental Health services.

Dr. Mershon prefaced his presentation by informing the Commission that MHSA funding is still a work in progress, and the most important change with MHSA funding has been the Children's Full Service Partnerships (FSP). FSP is a very high level of intensive services, "whatever it takes" and this is written into the DMH contract language, and based on a very extensive planning process, they developed goals in terms of providing services to three focal populations. These populations are: children birth to 5 years old; children involved with DCFS; and children involved with Probation. In addition, they added ethnicity targets, which no other county has done. Currently there are a total of 1725 child FSP slots and they are approximately 90% filled.

Commissioner Biondi inquired about Probation youth, and referenced in Dr. Mershon's handout whether the 186 represents the goal for those leaving Probation Camps or the general FSP, and if so why so little since 60%-80% in probation have mental health issues. Dr. Mershon stated that it is for the general FSP, which is for children birth to 15 years of age. He stated that TAY youth is 16 and up and they are serviced under the MHSA FSP for TAY, which has a annual target of 400 and are servicing 1569 youth exiting probation.

Chair Sorkin inquired whether the data represents unduplicated FSP from the Wraparound population. Dr. Mershon stated that Wraparound is another intensive service and the DMH Central Authorization Unit will not approve FSP if the child is already receiving intensive services elsewhere. Under special circumstances, they may transfer a case to FSP from Wraparound. The percentage of these cases is fairly low, is determined on a case by case basis, and the services are not concurrent.

Dr. Mershon discussed funding challenges impacting the County General Fund in the last year and this year that resulted in providers having an opportunity to use MHSA money as a match to transform programs into MHSA funded programs and increase their FSP slots, this includes Field Capable Clinical Services (FCCS). The majority of FCCS services are provided in the community such as: homes, schools, girls and boys clubs, housing developments, and faith-based programs are all field locations providers use to partner with to provide services, which enables families with children who need mental health services and have transportation issues receive services where it is more geographically convenient for them.

Additionally, DCFS and DMH are collaborating and there were initially 929 children identified as DCFS involved. After cross checking referrals, they found an additional 705 children involved, increasing the total by 30%. He stated that as a result of Katie A., DCFS and DMH have co-located staff. This enables CSWs to walk over to the DMH staff to discuss a case with mental health issues and for the DMH staff to help link them to an array of mental health services such as FSP. Chair Sorkin asked how many were generated by co-located staff. Dr. Mershon stated they didn't know. Ted Myers, of DCFS, indicated that DCFS is focusing on co-location and are implementing service linkage specialists and they have heard very positive reports about co-locating with DMH staff.

Dr. Mershon stated that a benefit of co-locating DMH staff in DCFS offices is their availability for Team Decision Making (TDM) meetings and are able to recommend where and how to place children and then follow-through to help make linkages happen. Commissioner Williams commented on stated the importance of cross-training staff, Dr. Mershon agreed and added that they anticipate greater collaboration as the co-location time increases. He informed the Commission that the Board of Supervisors allocated money to provide services for the co-located staff to use. Gita Cugley, of DMH, stated that they have provided the navigation teams with DCFS 101 training.

Dr. Mershon stated that a year ago, they conducted a small survey of child FSP recipients. They received feedback from parent partners on five questions: 1) Is FSP working for your child and family; 2) Is the FSP team supportive of your family's needs; 3) Are FSP services available to your family when you need them, no matter what time of day or night; 4) Do

you receive the majority of FSP services in your home; and 5) Overall, I am satisfied with the FSP services my child and family receive. The results, based on 64 respondents, indicated that 63% feel that FSP is working, and 72% feel the FSP team is supportive. It was also discovered that they were delivering more services at schools than in the homes. This was because providers had easier access to the children, but the therapists still went to the homes. Site visits to four FSP providers were conducted as a follow-up to address issues brought out by the survey. Some issues such as: delivery of services more at school than at home, 24/7 availability, and information on services not available to families have improved significantly. Overall, 72% of families were satisfied with the child FSP services they were receiving.

Commissioner Worthy-Clayton inquired if the 64 respondents were a random sample. Dr. Mershon stated that they were a random sample from across all SPAs. Commissioner McClaney inquired what the primary complaint among the survey respondents was. Ms. Cugley responded that they wanted more services in the home, not all agencies had parent partners, and 24/7 services were not available. They have since provided training on field safety to provide services in the home, training for parent partners, and offered suggestions on how to document and bill Medi-Cal. They also have a FSP roundtable provider network, to address issues.

Commissioner Biondi inquired how much CIMH is involved in FSP. Dr. Mershon stated that primarily for Child MHSA is the facilitator that helps with the Child FSP Roundtable for the providers. They also have training contracts with them for intensive in-home services and other evidence-based programs. Their recommendation led to the development of the Mental Health Screening Tool for birth to 5 and another for 6-18.

Commissioner Pedersen inquired about barriers to receiving consent from guardians and how this is handled. Dr. Mershon indicated that this is a huge issue for child MHSA FSP and especially for DCFS children. DMH and DCFS have been working with their County Counsel to develop a form to be signed as the CSW is processing the child into the system and shared as the child moves through the system. The form is now being implemented throughout the County. DMH also reminds providers that in most circumstances, children 12 years old and up are able to sign to consent to receive services. DMH has not given a uniform policy to the providers for consent to services, particularly with implementation of Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). They felt that the providers should consult with their own legal counsels and get an opinion for their agency on how to implement. DMH shares their policies, procedures, and forms and discusses what DMH is doing and strongly suggests they do likewise. Some providers are advised by their counsel to obtain a separate consent. Co-located staff will then help facilitate the processing of the DMH consent forms in compliance with HIPAA.

Commissioner Pedersen inquired about their work with Regional Centers, and commented on the increase in children with developmental disabilities who are dually diagnosed due to mental health issues. Ms. Cugley stated that they do a lot of outreach for the 0-5 year old population, and Dr. Mershon stated that they are definitely reaching out, but have not received many referrals back.

Chair Sorkin inquired about the SPAs, ethnicity, and characteristics of the 10% not satisfied. In addition, she inquired about the percentage of respondents who were Spanish speaking. Dr. Mershon stated that the respondents were a random sample across all SPAs. Ms. Cugley stated that, at the time of the survey, the program was only 25% full. She also stated that she would go back and collect the data requested. Dr. Mershon stated that they will send the information to the Commission office. Ted Myers suggested that DMH provide a one page fact sheet on the methodology for the survey.

**Follow-Up**

**Dr. Mershon will provide information on ethnicity, number of Spanish speaking respondents and other characteristics of the unsatisfied respondents to the Commission office.**

**Dr. Mershon will provide a Fact Sheet on the survey methodology.**

Dr. Mershon stated that they looked at the service location descriptions for children receiving child FSP and 59% were receiving services in the field. The primary location for field services was at home and the secondary location was at school.

Commissioner Biondi inquired how many people receiving services are homeless. Dr. Mershon stated that he does not know how many in the child FSP group are homeless. He stated that he is participating in a workgroup with the DMH Housing Development Program and Andrew Bridge, of the Child Welfare Initiative. They are working on an initiative for housing for Kinship Care providers to ensure that if a Kinship Care provider's housing does not meet requirements and are thus being prevented from accepting a child; that there would be housing slots available for them. This would enable children to stay with relatives rather than go to a non-related caregiver. Commissioner Biondi suggested that they begin to gather the homeless statistics for child FSP to provide information for the County's upcoming work on homeless. Dr. Mershon also stated that another way they address the issues of homelessness is through flex funds attached to each FSP slot. There is \$650.00 allocated per each FSP slot to help establish housing for families. This money does not need to be spent on a child per child basis. If an agency has ten slots, they receive \$6500.00. If they have only one family with housing needs, they may spend over the \$650.00 to establish housing for that family.

**TAY-MHSA**

Terri Boykins, of DMH, gave an update on TAY and distributed a document with a simple summary of achievements with MHSA funds. Since the State requires that 51% of MHSA funds be used for FSP, currently over 51% of the TAY budget is dedicated to FSP programs. The other programs include:

Field Capable Clinical Services, which are a less intense service than FSP and allows providers to provide, field capable clinical services to TAY as well as other age groups. Previously only older adult MHSA funded programs had field capable clinical services programs. The agencies are allowed to decide which age group they want to deliver field capable clinical services to. There are 13 providers for 96 slots, which does not meet the needs.

Two Drop-In Centers with ongoing funds are, the Jeff Griff Center in Hollywood and the other is the Hope Center in Irwindale. Both centers were funded through the MHSA money through a competitive bid process, with the goal of not starting new programs, but to add MHSA money to existing programs. This fiscal year the Drop-In Centers have been a huge magnet for TAY kids who are living on the streets to get primary services such as: food, showers, transportation, referrals for services, housing referrals, a mail box, and a place to wash and change clothes. The annual target is 832 and to date they have served 1297. For \$250,000.00 and extending hours of operation to later in the evening and on weekends, they have had a tremendous impact on youth. Commissioner Savelle inquired what the split was between the two sites. Ms. Boykins stated that it is very heavily weighted towards the Hollywood site. The Irwindale site is structured differently, it is located one or two miles from the MacLaren Children's Center, in an industrial area, and not close for foot traffic. It is about 75% Hollywood and 25% Irwindale. These sites were chosen because they were existing programs and there were not many proposals submitted.

Eight Housing Specialists have been hired to provide housing support services to TAY clients. There is one for each SPA and they are mostly located in transition resource centers. They provide access to short term shelter, transitional housing, and the Independent Living Program (ILP) to help find them an apartment. There is no funding associated with Housing Specialists. Commissioner McClaney inquired what the percentage is in the four different housing programs listed, and how they select their pool of apartments. Ms. Boykins stated that the highest percentage is for short term shelter. After that, it depends on what services the person qualifies for. Ms. Boykins also stated that they do not have a pool of apartments. The youth identifies an interest in an apartment; they help them fill out the application and may intervene with the landlords. Commissioner Rudnick asked what happens if the youth have no income, and was informed they have a TAY shelter program and also work with DPSS for benefits for these youth. Ms. Boykins stated flexible funds for TAY in FSP is utilized.

Ms. Boykins stated that data from the L.A. City/County Homeless Count indicates that 20%-25% of 18-25 year olds are homeless. However, they found that 60%-63% of the TAY population that are being referred to the FSP programs are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness. She stated that they are reaching the FSP population, but there is another population of youth that don't need the intense mental health services but need support and housing.

Commissioner Rudnick inquired about employment for these youth. Ms. Boykins stated that she was not aware of the employment numbers for TAY, but could find out. She stated that the Drop-In Centers are very good for finding employment. She also stated that the important issue with employment is youth sustaining and maintaining employment.

Ms. Boykins informed the Commission that although Probation Camps have an annual target of 400, there have been 1569 serviced. Commissioner Biondi asked how many Probation Navigators are now on board. Ms. Boykins stated that they have 4 out of the 5

Navigator positions filled. She also stated that Probation and DMH are working on space issues to deliver mental health services in the camp programs.

In addition, she stated the Navigation Teams have been assigned to each SPA, five in the Probation Camps, and two supervisors. They are tasked with getting youth to FSPs, linking youth, and responding to crisis situations. They have also seen an increase in the number of youth from jail with mental health issues. They typically range in age from 21-25 years old, have more chronic issues, and have had their first psychotic break. They are looking at training for providers to enable them to deliver services in the field.

She shared with the Commission some of the challenges experienced for TAY, and stated one of the issues is that they have existing child providers that want to be TAY providers but only service children up to 18 years old, and they have adult providers that want to be TAY providers that only service as young as 18 years old.

Commissioner Pedersen inquired about the 21-25 year olds who have had their first psychotic break, if they are dual diagnosed with mental health issues and substance abuse issues. Ms. Boykins stated that 40%-50% of these youth have co-occurring disorders or a history of co-occurring disorders that have never been dealt with. She stated that she is working on developing a co-occurring substance abuse treatment and training module for the TAY population. She stated that she does not believe that the FSPs can be truly successful in achieving the outcomes expected unless they are fully engaged and addressing substance abuse issues that these youth have.

## **VIII. PRESENTATION – EDUCATION COORDINATING COUNCIL**

### **• Strategic Plan**

Carrie Miller, of the Education Coordinating Council (ECC), gave a brief description of the ECC's creation, purpose, structure, its membership. She also informed the Commission of that ECC was due to sunset in June 2009. In March 2009, the Board of Supervisors voted to permanently institutionalize the ECC under the Chief Executive Office (CEO) in Miguel Santana's cluster beginning July 1, 2009. This will allow a stable funding stream, institutionalizes that education is important for County youth, and allows them to continue with the partnerships they have built.

Dr. Miller stated that some of the issues they are addressing regarding foster and probation children/youth youth face are: credits and records not being transferred timely or being lost, issues with attendance, students being enrolled in the wrong classes, schedules not completed, and not progressing thru schools as they should be. This is true for both Probation and DCFS youth, with Probation youth consistently worse. In a follow-up data match conducted last year, they found that an additional 700 youth scored at the proficient or advanced level for their grade than in the previous year. Also, for Probation youth, the suspension rate in the L.A. Unified School District (LAUSD) dropped from 77.8% to 48% in one year.



The Commission was informed that the ECC has developed a Strategic Plan with recommendations to address the above issues, and they have taken their 12 recommendations from their Blueprint and condensed it to five for their Strategic Plan. They are focusing on Strategy 1, the Dependency Education Pilot Project. The pilot project consists of 37 students at Pomona Unified School District and 39 at Montebello Unified School District. They have out-stationed Social Workers at both sites and a supervisor. The Social Workers (SWs) are funded by Supervisor Molina and the supervisor is funded by DCFS. The SWs have been doing individual case planning assessments, educational case planning using the Team Decision Making models, and working with the student and the school to assess what is needed. They found that about 30 students last year who had a GPA of 1.39 raised their GPA to 2.0 in Montebello and 2.3 in Pomona in one semester. They plan to roll out the pilot in September to other school districts one at a time and eventually County-wide. They will be in high schools only but eventually hope to include elementary schools.

Commissioner Savelle inquired if the Social Workers assigned to the Pilot Project also function as the case managers. Dr. Miller stated that their sole focus is educational case planning, and they work with the primary CSW and the caregivers. In the pilot they are testing the hypothesis that if a child is stabilized in school and is doing better, they will also do better at home, and with their placement stabilized they will be reunified quicker.

Commissioner Williams inquired if the LAUSD Foster Care Education Unit is still in place and if they are targeted to work with ECC. Dr. Miller indicated that the ECC plans to include LAUSD schools in the next round of the pilot because they have existing resources.

Commissioner Biondi inquired about the Charter School plan for the Probation Department. Dr. Miller stated that Strategy 2 of the ECC plan includes working with the Probation Department on the Comprehensive Educational Reform project for the Juvenile Halls and Probation Camps. The goal is raising educational achievement of the Probation youth through restructuring the way educational services are delivered at the Juvenile Halls and Probation Camps and transitioning from Juvenile Halls and Probation Camps to the community; and that the ECC is in the process of developing a dependent charter school run by LACOE. This will require a 51% vote by teachers, which has resulted in a delay causing them to look into an independent charter schools. Commissioner Biondi inquired who the Probation point person for Strategy 2 is. Dr. Miller stated that there is a successful pilot at Camp Holton that follows the youth up to 180 days after they leave camp. They have targeted the youth leaving camp in July 2009 as the first wave. Commissioner Biondi suggested consulting with Camp Gonzalez as they have worked out a lot of the issues.

For Strategy 3 they are partnering with the Office of Child Care to help them implement policy framework for enrolling DCFS children under the age of six and the children of DCFS and Probation youth into high quality early care and education programs.

Commissioner Williams inquired if they are partnering with First 5. Dr. Miller stated that they do work with First 5 and First 5 is a member of ECC.

For Strategy 4, ECC are working with DCFS and Probation to enroll youth in after-school and summer extracurricular and enrichment programs.

For Strategy 5, ECC is working to resolve barriers for sharing educational information between County departments and school districts throughout Los Angeles County. As a solution for educational data sharing, they have drafted language to be included in the Minute Orders to the school districts. The Minute Orders will serve as a Court Order which orders the school districts to share information with the DCFS case workers. Judge Nash has agreed to make the changes and they are having their first workgroup meeting on June 4, 2009 to finalize the language. They anticipate that it will be put into effect by September 2009. The Probation Department is anxious to begin a similar endeavor. The next step is to figure out how to share this information electronically.

**IX. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no Public Comments.

**X. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Chair Sorkin announced that Harriete Chase e-mailed the Commission Office regarding the League of Women Voter's Foster Care Forum, "It Takes a Village to Raise a Foster Child" held on April 21, 2009. More than 100 people attended, personal stories were shared about the foster care program, and the audience was eager to learn how they could help.

The Executive Director announced to the Commission that she e-mailed them the 2008-2009 Annual Report Feedback. She also reminded the Commissioners that the Committee Chairs and Commissioners who represent the Commission on Community Workgroups complete the form and return it by June 30, 2009.

**XI. ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Sorkin.